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City of St. John's

Proposed Central Area Development Guidelines

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STORAGE

January 1980

Price \$5

*This volume was donated to
the University of Toronto by
Derek J.W. Little
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Consultants Co. Ltd.*

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January 25, 1980

Mayor D. Wyatt
City of St. John's
Newfoundland
A1C 5M2

Dear Mayor Wyatt:


We take great pleasure in presenting to Council the results of our study of development guidelines for the central area of St. John's. The recommendations give a more precise definition of land uses within the central area, including densities, height limits, a revised parking policy and open space provisions. In summary our recommendations include:

- A concentrated major retail district using existing anchor stores and having a defined size so that the retail core of St. John's can function as a strong cohesive unit of regional importance.
- An area for major new office development at the west end of the downtown, where it will support the retail district and where it is well served by roads and can be provided with adequate parking.
- An area for secondary office development in small scale new buildings, or in renovated second and third storey space located in the central and eastern sections of the downtown, where parking is restricted, streets are narrow and there are a large number of Heritage buildings and where buildings and streetscapes of satisfying human scale now exist.
- A resident population which should be encouraged to remain in existing neighbourhoods and to grow in new mixed-use development throughout the downtown.

St. John's is now at a critical point in its development. Recent off-shore oil discovery indicates that there will be substantial new investment and development in St. John's. The current absence of clearly stated public policy and guidelines for new development creates a climate of uncertainty for the potential investor and the property owner. It is our view that St. John's should encourage investment in new downtown development with a framework of accepted planning policy which directs it to occur in areas of greatest benefit to the central core and the city as a whole. As planners, we have outlined a recommended land use plan for the downtown. As architects who regularly act for large clients in the development field, we have tested the proposed land use plan for economic feasibility and for physical and aesthetic performance.

You will note than in the Primary Office Centre we have reduced the total maximum density permitted from 6.0 times the area of the lot to 4.0, with the height limited reduced from 120 feet to 96 feet. This reduction from the earlier draft report is a result of considerations made since the release of the draft. Factors which affected this recommendation include the size of prime office area and the scale and the potential market in St. John's. A density of 6.0 is a very high one and would permit a single owner with a large assembly to capture a significant share of the market for some time to come: It would be preferable to distribute new construction in modules more suited to the rate of market absorption and to permit a wide variety of entrepreneurs to undertake such initiatives. It might be noted that the Royal Trust project has a density of 3.9. This question should be given careful consideration by Council.

We believe that Council now has the opportunity to work with the private sector, creating a climate for new investment in St. John's which will assure that the city grows in an attractive and efficient manner. The decisions of the next few weeks will be among the most important Council will take in securing the future of the City. A clear, rational and reasonable land use planning framework for the downtown provides the basis for these decisions.



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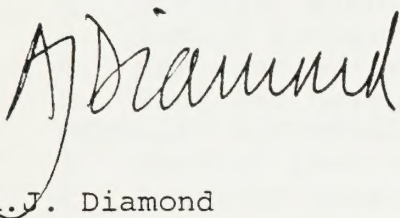
Mayor D. Wyatt

-3-

January 25, 1980

We have very much enjoyed the opportunity of working with Council and staff in developing the guidelines outlined in this report, and wish you and the City every success in implementing a new downtown plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "A.J. Diamond". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

A.J. Diamond

AJD:rvo
Encl.

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Summary and Recommendations

1

I SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central area of the City of St. John's should maintain and strengthen its role as the major regional focus for shopping service, office employment, civic and administrative functions and entertainment and cultural activity. It should contain a residential population which is stable and growing and which represents a full range of life styles, family types and socio-economic groups. A framework of land use and development policy should be adopted which makes provision for new development appropriate to the needs of modern industry, retailing and residential needs, while preserving the scale and character of the heritage area of central St. John's and encouraging its re-use in a modern context.

The following recommendations for allocation of land uses and development guidelines for the future growth of the St. John's area are based on these objectives.

1. A primary retail area should be designated of appropriate size to function efficiently as a single economic unit. The primary retail area should be supported through public policy as the major shopping district for Metropolitan St. John's. The primary retail area should be concentrated

on Water Street and should not exceed an approximate length of 2,000 feet from Steer's Cove in the west to a point approximately 40 metres (150 feet) west of Prescott Street. Where possible, and particularly in the area south of City Hall, the retail area should extend north and south at right angles to Water Street. Within this area continuous retail use should be required at grade level in all buildings fronting on Water Street.

2. A primary office centre should be designated to provide a concentrated area of modern office development as the major office employment centre for Metropolitan St. John's. The primary office centre should be located at the west end of the downtown where there is good road access on the new Harbour Arterial, where substantial vacant sites provide the opportunity for adequate parking, where office development will support the primary retail area, and where the depth of blocks and topography facilitate major new development.
3. A secondary office area should be designated to provide office space at lower rents and in smaller increments to serve the secondary office market of individual professional or service companies. The secondary office area

should be located in the central and eastern sectors of St. John's downtown where the opportunity to provide large amounts of parking space is limited, where blocks and streets are narrow and where renovated space or smaller scale new buildings can be accommodated without harming the scale and character of the Heritage Area.

4. A Civic Centre area should be developed, focussed on the existing City Hall, with new housing at medium density to the east, a hotel, office and retail complex to the west and a transition zone of low to medium density housing along Wickford Street to the north.
5. Existing low density neighbourhoods adjacent to the downtown should be protected from spillover effects of traffic and parking and should be assisted with physical upgrading of streets, parks and housing stock. These neighbourhoods should be stable and attractive places to live. Existing housing form and density should be preserved.
6. New residential development should be encouraged in mixed use development in all areas of the central core. Particular encouragement should be given to new housing which takes advantage of views of the harbour and to new housing of a type suitable for families.

7. New parking ratios should be set for development the central area and should be consistently enforced for all new development. The option to provide payment in lieu of parking should be given with all parking funds kept in a special Central Area parking account and used to develop new parking structures in convenient locations.

Inventory and Analysis 2

II INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The City of St. John's, the capital of the Province of Newfoundland, is the province's major financial, industrial, service, education and cultural centre. With a population in 1976 of 143,000 the City is a major regional service centre. The City currently lacks a comprehensive planning framework to guide new development in its downtown core. As pressure for new development at higher densities grows there is a need for clear land use and zoning policies. The purpose of this study is to provide these policies.

1. Physical Characteristics

St. John's is one of Canada's oldest cities. Settlement began as early as 1610. Permanent settlement in the harbour was resisted for a long time due to the strong British fishing interests who felt that permanent residents would interfere with their profits. However, the settlement at St. John's inevitably grew based on the harbour and the fishing trade, and was finally recognized when permission was granted to allow private property ownership in the city in the early nineteenth century. A series of fires throughout the nineteenth century destroyed the largely frame buildings on several occasions culminating in the fire of 1892 which razed

almost two thirds of the city. Most of the building stock remaining in St. John's core area today dates from just after 1892. The irregular street pattern traces and preserves the earlier city's layout.

The physical structure of the core area is an interesting one, dictated by the old street pattern, the harbour, and the steep rock gradient rising away from the waterfront. The central business area is narrow and elongated - concentrated on two curving parallel east-west streets just above the harbour, Duckworth and Water Streets. At the eastern boundary of the core there is a modest concentration of hotel space, the Hotel Newfoundland and the Battery Hotel. Residential areas lie just to the north of the Water/Duckworth Corridor with compact late Victorian frame row housing of two and three stories as the predominant housing form. These terrace houses are built tightly against the street line with small or non-existent garden space. The architectural character of the city is, in part, formed by the clear deep colours in which the buildings are painted, set against the exposed dark grey rock.

The Duckworth/Water Street commercial buildings are primarily masonry - stone or brick - two and three storeys lining both streets almost continuously. Retail uses occur at grade level,

concentrated primarily in the central and western sections of the corridor where Woolworth's , Bowrings, Ayres (recently closed) and the Atlantic Place interior shopping mall provide a series of retail "anchors". Second and third floors are occupied as office space, low rent apartments or are vacant.

In sharp contrast to this tight low-rise building form are two recent buildings - The Royal Trust and the Atlantic Place. The Royal Trust is a twelve storey office tower in a typical high rise block form at a density of 3.9 times the area of its lot. On the south side of Water Street it marks the approximate edge of concentrated retail use. A block and a half further west, Atlantic Place is a bulky six-storey brick complex consisting of combined office and retail space of 185,000 square feet. A 728 parking garage directly adjoins the development. The Atlantic Place developer has Council commitment to complete the building with an additional eleven floor tower above the existing building. Its present density is 7.9 the area of its lot.

The City's original City Hall was demolished several years ago and a new City Hall has been built on a site north of Duckworth Street and at the far west end of the core. Adjacent to the City Hall, on both sides, are two large vacant sites for which development proposals have recently been invited encouraging a

mix of hotel, office and residential use.

Predominant traffic flows are east-west and this movement system has been reinforced by the building of the Harbour Arterial, a major expressway which ends just at the western edge of the core area. North-south movement tends to be truncated with short steep grades, sharp turns and streets which terminate within a block or two of the harbour.

2. Social Characteristics

The core area of St. John's houses approximately 11,000 people, but the residential population of the core has been declining steadily since the early 1950's. This is a common and unwelcome phenomenon in North American cities and the rate of decline in St. John's is particularly high with St. John's experiencing the largest percentage drop in its inner city population of any Canadian city during the years 1971 - 76 (24.4%). The result is an aging core area population and an increasing number of non-family and one person households. Incomes in this area are 20% to 30% below the average for the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area. A high percentage of family households are single parent and unemployed. While the housing stock in the core area is basically physically sound and is highly attractive as an example of late nineteenth century terrace housing, the type of accommodation it offers is clearly not presently

competitive with available new suburban housing for the middle income family.*

As suburban development has drawn the residential population out of the core, suburban shopping centres have pulled major amounts of retail activity away also. Many of the downtown merchants have opened shops in the malls and the move of Sears to a shopping centre along with the closing of Ayres has made downtown retail merchants uneasy about the future. The traditional downtown focus for the City appears now to be weakening and becoming somewhat dispersed.

3. Economic Characteristics

The overall depressed economy of the Province of Newfoundland has been reflected in downtown St. John's by a relatively low pressure for major redevelopment. There are some beneficial aspects to this.

The heritage characteristics of continuous late nineteenth century and early twentieth century buildings have been preserved almost intact. The St. John's core has not lost its human scale, the detail, colour and style which make it unique and distinguishable from the anonymity of most North American cities. However, the core area merchants are understandably concerned

* "An Inner City in Decline", "St. John's, Newfoundland", Mark Shrimpton and Christopher Sharpe, Urban History Review, 1980

about the decline in core area retailing. They feel keenly the twin blows of dropping core area residential population and the growth of peripheral shopping malls. Moreover, there is a strong sense that the Metropolitan area as a whole is now "over-stored".

Land prices in downtown St. John's are still reasonable in comparison with most Canadian cities. Residential land adjacent to the core sells at an average of \$2.00 per square foot. Prime commercial land in the core or directly adjacent tends to range considerably in value from a low of \$3.00 to \$4.00 per square foot to a high of \$25.00 per square foot (a recent sales price which included a large and fairly new building).

Recent explorations for off-shore oil at the Hibernia site appear more and more positive in their findings. At this stage it is impossible to predict what the economic impact on St. John's off-shore oil production will be. However, it is clear that some speculation in downtown land is occurring and it can be assumed that there will now be pressure for new core area development at higher densities.

4. Land Cost and Density Relationship

Because there has been virtually an unlimited density permissible for new development in St. John's, the question of setting densities such as are recommended in this study may cause concern

about economic feasibility. The economic feasibility of new development is a crucial question. The intention of these guidelines is to encourage investment in appropriate ways downtown. In order to test the economic feasibility of the proposed densities we have taken land costs similar to those prevailing in downtown St. John's and conducted a series of economic pro forma analyses, which are illustrated in the following tables.

Density is expressed as a floor area ratio (F.A.R.) - that is the amount of building space as a factor of site area. For example, a site of 1,000 square feet with an F.A.R. of 1.0 would permit a building of 1,000 square feet. With an F.A.R. of 2.0 a building of 2,000 square feet could be built.

The analysis has been carried out for land values of \$5.00, \$10.00, \$15.00 and \$20.00 per square foot. Construction costs have been taken at \$50.00 per square foot (which is the approximate current new construction cost in St. John's). Other costs, such as taxes during construction, insurance, fees and interim financing total approximately 20% or \$10.00 per square foot. These costs are applicable for any project. They will not vary appreciably at varying densities.

Thus for development on land that costs \$15.00 per square foot the total development cost could be \$50.00 construction cost plus \$10.00 soft costs plus \$15.00 land cost, for a total of \$75.00 per square foot. This cost would be true for a project built at an F.A.R. of 1.0.

Should the same project be built on a land that has an F.A.R. factor of 2.0, the land costs would be \$7.50 per square foot rather than \$15.00, as the land cost is now spread over twice the amount of building area. An F.A.R. of 3.0 on land which costs \$15.00 would mean a land unit cost of \$5.00 per square foot.

It is generally assumed that a good investment requires a revenue of one sixth of capital costs per annum. Thus a total development cost of \$65.00 would require \$10.83 per square foot rental per annum ($\frac{65}{6} = \$10.83$).

It is thus clear that the higher the density, the smaller the unit land cost. In this particular instance the tables and graph indicate that at above an F.A.R. density of 4.0, the difference in rentals between projects built on \$20.00 and \$5.00 land costs amount to less than 70 cents per square foot per annum, above an F.A.R. of 5.0 less than 55 cents difference

per square foot per annum. The difference in rentals between projects built on land costs of \$5.00 and \$15.00 per square foot above an F.A.R. of 4.0 is about 40 cents per square foot per annum.

Current net rentals in downtown St. John's range from about \$3.00 to \$6.00 per square foot for second floor office space above stores on Water and Duckworth Street, to a top of about \$10.00 to \$12.00 per square foot for modern office space in new buildings. Thus it can be seen that with current land values and construction costs the densities recommended in this report are well within reason, and indeed there is little gain in return on investment for increase in density above an F.A.R. of 4.0.

In summary, the economic pro forma analysis demonstrates that there is no financial hardship or disincentive to development in downtown St. John's through the imposition of density control recommended in this study.

LAND VALUE \$15.00

F.A.R.	Land Cost (per sq.ft.)	Total Develop- ment Cost (per sq.ft.)	Rental Required to Give Annual Return of 1/6 Capital Costs (per sq.ft.)
.5	\$30.00	\$90.00	\$15.00
1.0	15.00	75.00	12.50
2.0	7.50	67.50	11.25
3.0	5.00	65.00	10.83
4.0	3.75	63.75	10.62
5.0	3.00	63.00	10.50
6.0	2.50	62.50	10.40
7.0	2.14	62.14	10.35
8.0	1.87	61.87	10.31
9.0	1.66	61.66	10.27
10.0	1.50	61.50	10.25

LAND VALUE \$20.00

.5	\$40.00	\$100.00	\$16.66
1.0	20.00	80.00	13.33
2.0	10.00	70.00	11.66
3.0	6.66	66.66	11.10
4.0	5.00	65.00	10.83
5.0	4.00	64.00	10.66
6.0	3.30	63.30	10.55
7.0	2.85	62.85	10.475
8.0	2.50	62.50	10.41
9.0	2.22	62.22	10.37
10.0	2.00	62.00	10.33

LAND VALUE \$5.00

F.A.R.	Land Cost (per sq.ft.)	Total Develop- ment Cost (per sq.ft.)	Rental Required to Give Annual Return of 1/6 Capital Costs (per sq.ft.)
.5	\$10.00	\$70.00	\$11.66
1.0	5.00	65.00	10.83
2.0	2.50	62.50	10.40
3.0	1.60	61.60	10.26
4.0	1.25	61.25	10.20
5.0	1.00	61.00	10.16
6.0	.83	60.83	10.13
7.0	.71	60.71	10.11
8.0	.62	60.62	10.10
9.0	.55	60.55	10.09
10.0	.50	60.50	10.08

LAND VAULE \$10.00

.5	\$20.00	\$80.00	\$13.33
1.0	10.00	70.00	11.66
2.0	5.00	65.00	10.83
3.0	3.33	63.33	10.55
4.0	2.50	62.50	10.41
5.0	2.00	62.00	10.33
6.0	1.66	61.66	10.27
7.0	1.42	61.42	10.23
8.0	1.25	61.25	10.20
9.0	1.11	61.11	10.18
10.0	1.00	61.00	10.16

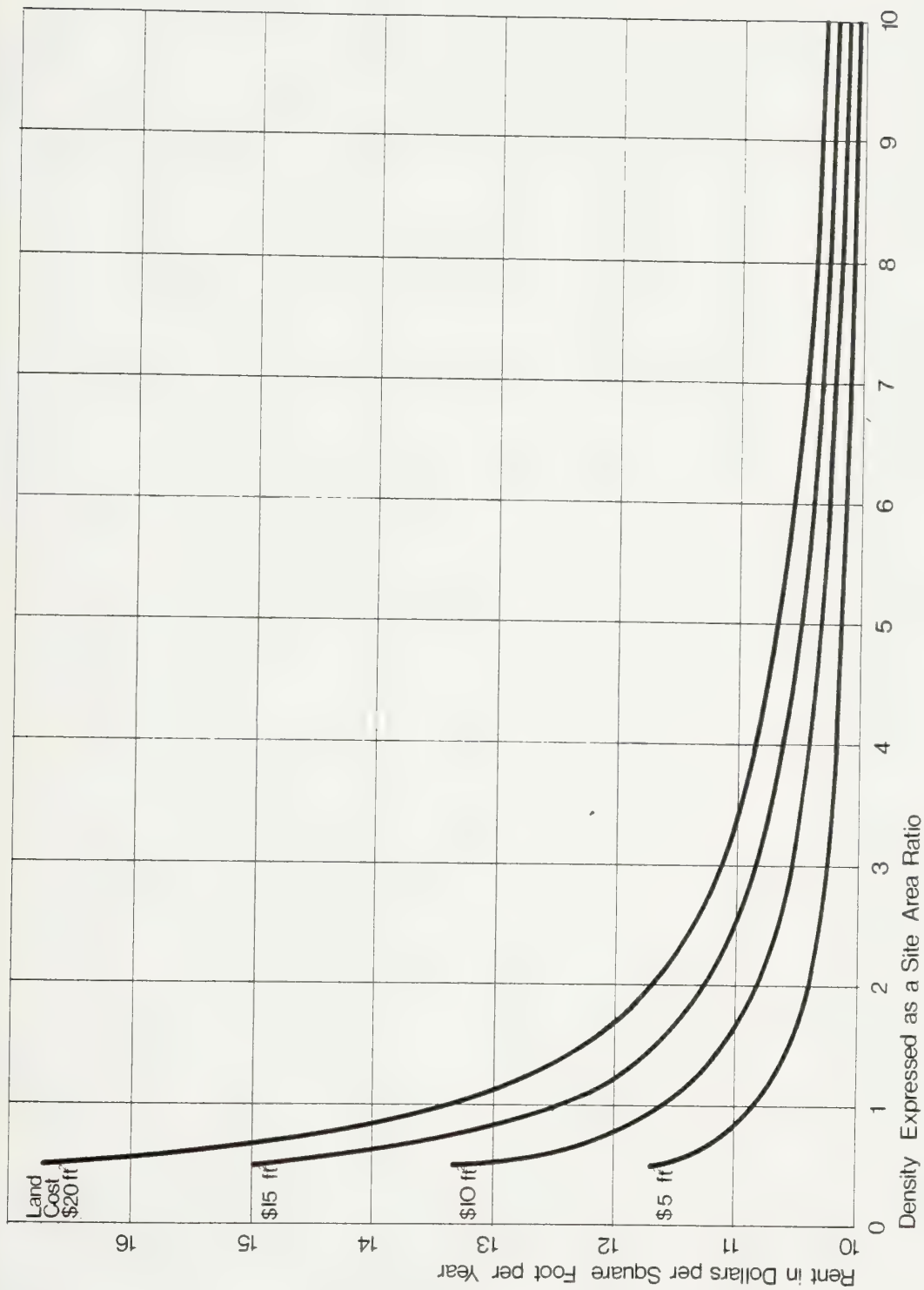


Figure II.4.1

DENSITY/LAND VALUE RELATIONSHIP

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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January 1980

5. Study Purpose

In light of the physical, social and economic structure of downtown St. John's, and of the pressure for change, the City has recognized the need for an overall planning framework for the core area. The lack of adequate development control guidelines, arising from a credible, accepted policy framework, has forced Council to deal with development applications on an ad hoc basis, resulting in conflict and delay. The City wishes to make best use of the private investment which will occur in the future - allowing new development to occur in appropriate locations, forms and densities. The purpose of this study is to develop a development control policy and land use and built form guidelines for downtown St. John's.



Figure III.1.1

STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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Planning Context

3

III PLANNING CONTEXT

1. Definition of Boundaries

The commercial district of the downtown is concentrated on Duckworth and Water Streets. A new Civic Centre complex is emerging at the northwest edge of the core. Residential areas between Duckworth and Gower Streets are directly affected physically, economically and socially by the commercial area, and their health and stability similarly affect the adjacent commercial core. Thus the study boundaries have been drawn inclusively to take in the area roughly bounded by Brennan Street in the west, John Street, Wickford and Gower Streets in the north, Factory Lane in the east and the Harbour in the south (Figure III.1.1.).

2. Official Plan

An Official Plan for the City of St. John's is now being prepared by the City's planning staff and should be complete in draft form by the end of this year. In 1970 a draft Master Plan entitled "Plan 91" proposed a central core similar to the study area outlined in this report. This plan suggested a system of three major arterial feeder routes making a ring road around the downtown, with traffic distributed into the downtown on Duckworth Street (east-west) and Prescott Street (north-south). A severe lack of core area parking was identified



Figure III.3.1

EXISTING ZONING

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
A. J. Diamond Planners Ltd. January 1980

and major off-street parking facilities were recommended at either end of the downtown with a shuttle bus service along Water Street which was proposed as a "transit only" pedestrian mall. This draft Master Plan, "Plan 91", was not adopted by Council.

3. Zoning By-law

The Zoning By-law for the City of St. John's was passed in 1968 and has subsequently been amended from time to time. Existing zoning in the study area is illustrated on Figure III.3.1.

The major portion of the study area is designated central commercial. There are industrial areas along the waterfront with concentration of industry at the east and west ends. The remainder of the study area is designated institutional or residential, reflecting to a large extent existing use.

Central Commercial Policies

The central commercial zone allows a full range of commercial uses including retail, office, entertainment and institutional uses. Residential use is permitted above the first floor. There is no height limit and no maximum floor space ratio. One hundred per cent building coverage is allowed for buildings less than five storeys in height,

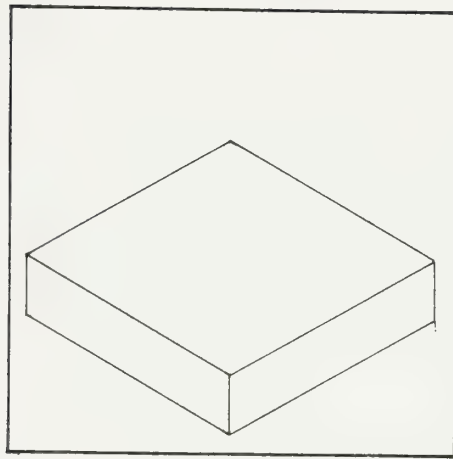
above five storeys the building must be set back from the side and rear boundaries of the lot three feet per storey at grade level. New buildings in the central commercial zone are required to provide parking in the amounts of one space per 100 square feet of retail space and one space per 200 square feet of office.

The effect of the set back requirements, if they are rigidly applied, is to encourage large scale development on very large lots. As the lot size increases, so does the optimal height and size of building which can be built. Figure III.3.2. shows the effect on building form of applying the existing set back regulations to a series of buildings at different heights on a lot of 150 feet by 150 feet. Figure III.3.3. plots a graph of the height and floor area which can be achieved on a series of lot sizes ranging in size from 50 feet by 50 feet to 350 feet by 350 feet. It can be seen that compliance with the zoning by-law's set back requirements produces an optimal height and square footage which increases dramatically as the lot size increases. Thus large scale assembly and development are implicitly encouraged, resulting in extensive set backs and wide open spaces between high buildings.

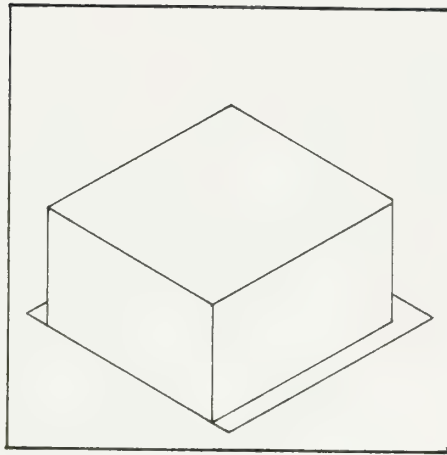
The parking requirement for the central commercial zone is very onerous and is perhaps more suited to a suburban situation than an urban one where parking must normally be located within the building. At a ratio of one space per 200 square feet for office commercial space, more than one half of a building must be given over to parking (350 square feet gross per car including circulation space).

Residential Policies

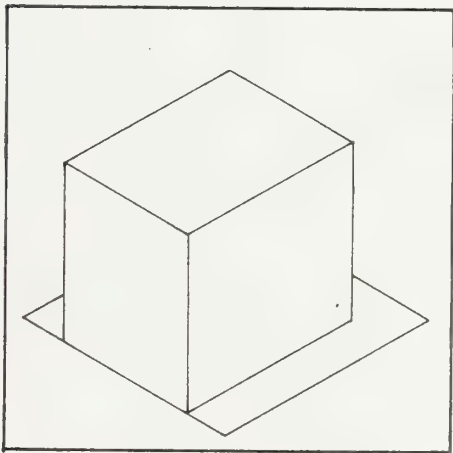
At the east end of the core area between Duckworth and Gower Streets there is an R2 residential zone interspersed with Central Commercial. The R2 zone permits one and two family dwellings, apartments or row housing. Minimum lot sizes, frontages, unit floor areas and open space ratios are outlined for each housing type. Most of the prevailing row housing which exists in the area could not be built under the provisions of this by-law. Semi-detached units are required to have a minimum 35 foot frontage for each unit and a maximum 30% lot coverage, and row housing a minimum frontage and lot size which for narrow dwellings (15'-20') would necessitate a depth of lot impossible to achieve in the prevailing block sizes.



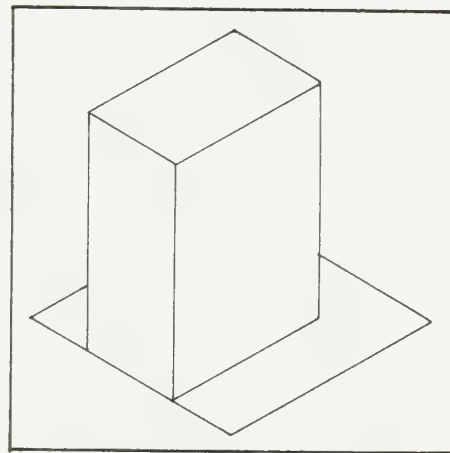
5 storeys



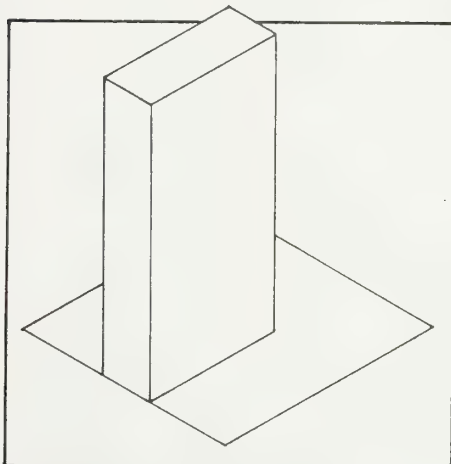
10 storeys



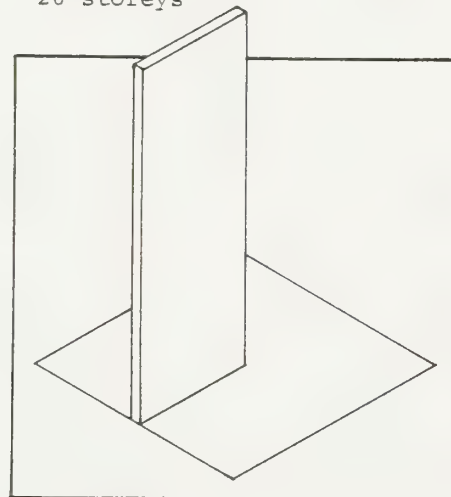
15 storeys



20 storeys



25 storeys



30 storeys

Figure III.2.3

EXISTING ZONING: BUILT FORM EXAMPLES

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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January 1980

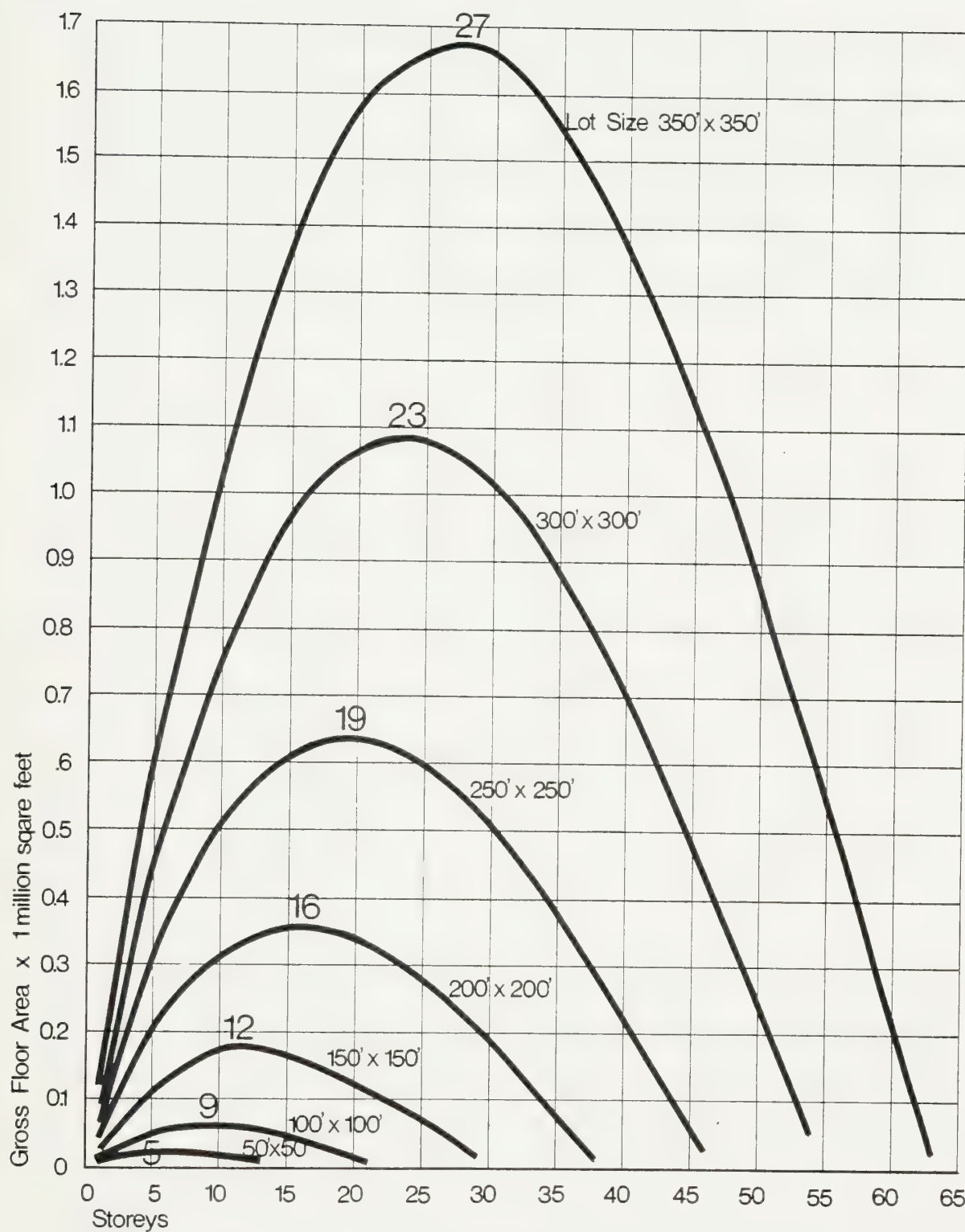


Figure III.3.3

In the central portion of the core area between Duckworth and Wickford Streets is an area of housing which is zoned R3. The R3 zone permits one and two family dwellings, row housing, apartments, some institutional uses and small shops of not more than 1,000 square feet. Minimum frontage, lot size, unit size and coverage regulations are similar to those in the R2 zone.

Industrial Policies

The General Industrial zone which occurs along the waterfront permits any manufacturing or industrial business, warehousing, transportation terminal, associated business offices and commercial operations, harbourfront related and wholesale businesses. There are fairly stringent off-street loading and parking requirements, but no density, height or bulk controls, no set back requirements or provisions for buffering between adjacent uses.

4. Heritage By-Law

In 1976 a Heritage Conservation Area Study was commissioned in St. John's by Heritage Canada, the Province of Newfoundland and the Newfoundland Historic Trust. The study was intended to evaluate the feasibility of a heritage conservation program in St. John's, to examine the physical characteristics of the

building stock in downtown St. John's and to recommend an area which might be designated for heritage conservation. Following a careful evaluation of building condition, architectural quality, the configuration of streets, walkways and open spaces and site specific land values and renovation costs, a program of heritage conservation was outlined with recommended boundaries and implementing legislation. In 1977 the St. John's Council passed a Heritage By-Law for downtown St. John's.

The By-law sets the Heritage Area boundaries (Figure III.4.1.), setups a Heritage Advisory Committee and introduces a permissive legislation allowing the City to designate individual buildings. Demolition of buildings, changes to building facades and new buildings within the Heritage Area are not allowed without the permission of Council. No time limit is placed on Council's ability to stop demolition, making this element of Heritage area control one of the strongest in Canada. Design control over new building is exercised in the following sections:

- "13. (1) The bulk, size, height, design and external appearance or any of them of a building in a Heritage Area as altered pursuant to Section 11 hereof or of a proposed building in a Heritage Area shall be compatible with the environment and other buildings in the locality in which the building is or the proposed building is to be located.



Figure III.4.1

HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARIES

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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- (2) No Heritage Structure shall be used or occupied in a manner which is incompatible with the environment, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the number of family units therein shall not violate the provisions of the St. John's Building Regulations, nor shall any commercial or industrial enterprise carried on therein violate the Zoning By-Laws of the City.
- (3) No proposed building shall be unsuitable in general character, design and external appearance to the Heritage Structures or other buildings in a relevant Heritage Area." *

(underlining not in original text)

Unfortunately the wording of this section is somewhat vague. The terms "compatible", "general character" and "design" are not defined. The study's recommendations for the adoption of design guidelines for new construction and rehabilitation, the ability to acquire facade easements, and the local tax abatement were not adopted in the by-law. The adoption of these recommendations would have provided more certainty for the developer of new building about the requirements for approval and would encourage the retention and rehabilitation of sound older commercial and residential properties. Nevertheless the legislation is some of the best in Canada. Due to its relative newness, however, it has not yet been tested as a tool to preserve the special heritage quality and physical character of downtown St. John's.

* The Heritage By-Law of the City of St. John's, passed by St. John's Municipal Council, June 22, 1977. Section 13,(1), (2) and (3)

5. East End Neighbourhood Improvement Program

Five Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) areas were approved between 1975 and 1978 adjacent to the core area of St. John's. The objective of this joint Federal/Provincial/Municipal program is to improve the physical condition of inner city neighbourhoods in order to stabilize inner city residential population. The program allows a local residents' committee to recommend to Council the use of funding for neighbourhood upgrading - street and sidewalk repairs, open space and playground development, community centres, etc. It also allows a community to make use of low interest loans and grants which are directed at the rehabilitation of individual housing units.

The East End Neighbourhood Improvement Area, with a residential population of 4,000, is directly a part of the current study area (Figure III.5.1.). This Neighbourhood Improvement Plan, which was adopted by Council in 1976, is essentially concerned with preserving the existing residential neighbourhood and recommends the creation of six open space areas, the development of pedestrian lanes and walkways and a program of planting and beautification. Parking is identified as a major problem. The commercial area on Duckworth Street generates spillover employee parking on residential streets. Residents themselves have little or no private parking adjacent to their houses. While household car ownership is now very low in the area, this

remains a continuing and growing problem. The central commercial zone along Duckworth Street is restricted to its existing level but no bulk and density controls or parking requirements are suggested by the study.

6. Summary of Existing Development Control and Policy Planning

The Official Plan and Zoning By-Law are traditionally the governing regulations for the development of a city. These documents outline the city's objectives for its future and translate those objectives into land use designations and specific control of the form, size and transportation and parking impacts of new development. They provide the private owner and developer with some certainty about the present and future uses of his land.

St. John's has no accepted Official Plan and its Zoning By-law clearly encourages high rise building form set in large open plazas with very large amounts of the building used as parking structure. It seems evident that this document does not reflect the objectives of the City for new development. Perhaps because the parking standards are so high and set back regulation so draconian, recent practice has been for City Council to use its discretion to waive parking and set back requirements and to negotiate parking, height, bulk and form for each individual development on a site by site basis. Figure III.6.1. shows



Figure III.5.1

**EAST END N.I.P. AREA
BOUNDARIES**

**CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

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development of the city in a form and scale which might result if the zoning by-law were fully implemented.

The Heritage report and by-law set clear objectives and implementation policy for the preservation of the historic quarter of downtown St. John's. The character and scale of this area are potentially of enormous benefit to St. John's, giving it a charm and attractiveness which rarely exist in the modern North American city. Although the Heritage By-law is very recent, it has begun to be implemented by the Heritage Foundation who have renovated a retail/office building on Water Street and a row of Victorian houses within the study area. Subsequently there are signs of further private investment and interest in renovation and restoration. However, it is recognized that St. John's is a functioning modern city and that it must be able to accept new, modern office and retail development at higher densities than the existing buildings will permit. While heritage policies have been well and thoughtfully researched, the City presently lacks an equally careful and comprehensive framework of policy to deal with higher density new development and to support the full range of economic functions which a healthy core area must accommodate. Current planning documents lack an overall policy framework. Council is thus unable to encourage new development and direct it in ways which are beneficial to the whole downtown.

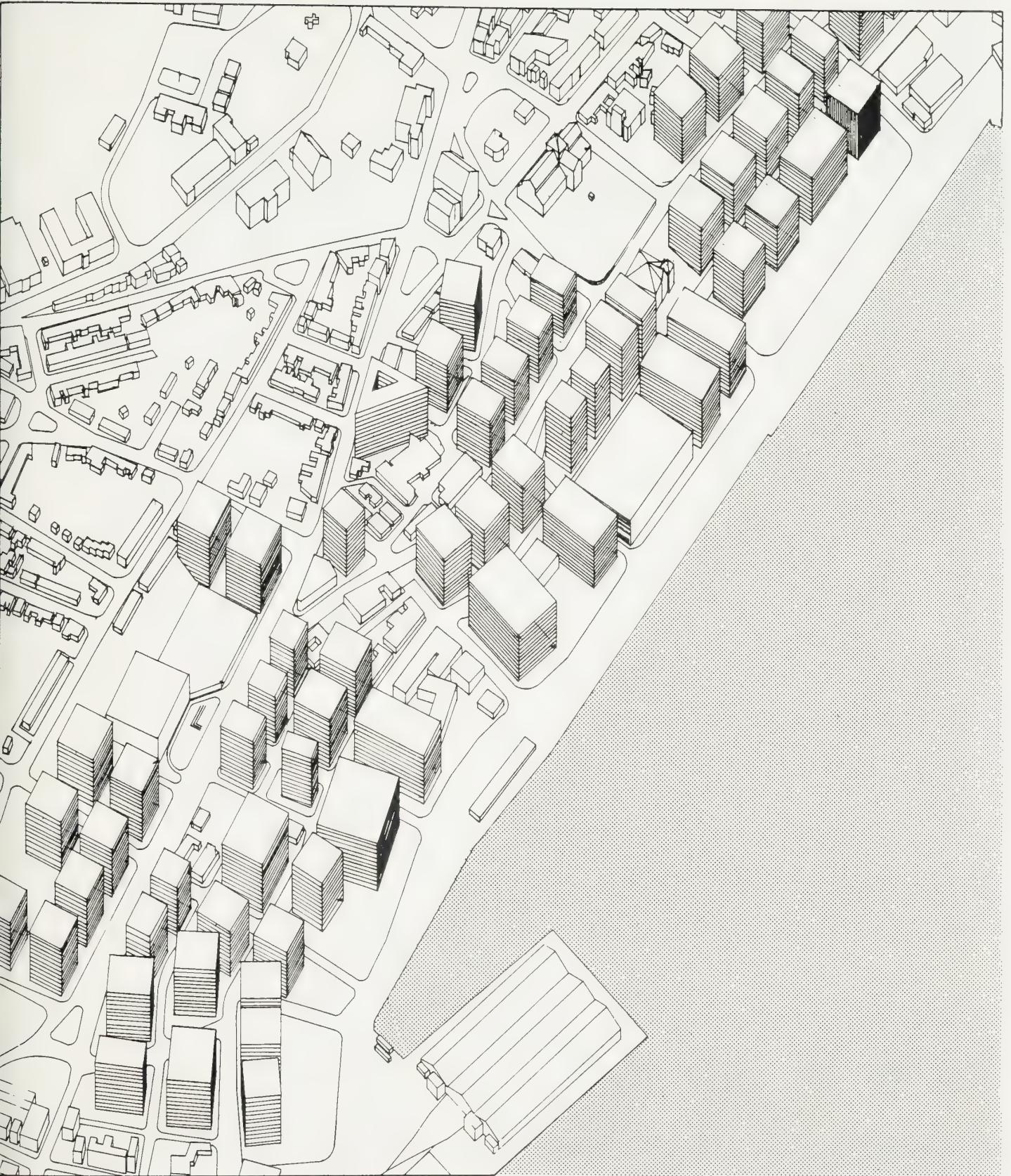


Figure III.6.1

CENTRAL AREA FULLY
DEVELOPED AT 12 STOREYS
CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
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Detailed Recommendations

4

IV DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General Land Use Framework

A vital, developing downtown depends upon a mixture of uses, each of which must have a physical and economic environment which is supportive. The range of uses which the downtown should encourage includes:

Retail-Commercial - the central area should provide the major focus for retail activity in the Metropolitan Area. It should offer the widest range and array of goods and services in the region.

Office Commercial - the central area should have the major concentration of office space. The office core should be as compact as possible to permit easy face-to-face communication between related sectors of tertiary industry (e.g. resource development, real estate, financial services, legal services)

Residential - the central area and its immediately adjacent neighbourhoods should provide a choice of housing type and life style opportunity to encourage a stable and growing residential market and labour force. A resident population in the central area creates activity at all hours, and supports a greater variety of retail business activity downtown.

Institutional - a concentration of civic buildings, major library and cultural facilities, churches, educational institutions in the central area gives the downtown a richness and focus which makes it truly the heart of the city.

Industrial - in fringe locations where industry is active and healthy it should be supported. Harbour-related industry which requires the harbour location for its viability is also necessary and can add vitality and interest to the downtown. However, where industry sterilizes large sites or has a harmful spillover effect on adjacent land uses, consideration should be given to relocation, consistent with a balanced employment base.

Retail-Commercial uses are perhaps the most fragile and most dependent on location, physical environment and adjacent activity of all uses. The existence of major anchor stores, the length and continuity of retail activity, access, convenient parking, an attractive pedestrian environment and a marketable image are critical factors.

The requirements for attractive residential use are also very stringent. A sense of neighbourhood, quiet, safe streets and play areas, privacy and space in the unit are important for families with children. Convenience to shopping and work,

easy maintenance and attractiveness of the unit are important for the young, single and elderly. Convenient safe parking is a consideration but may be slightly less important in a downtown location.

Office commercial uses are less sensitive to location than retail but require good access and sufficient parking within reasonable walking distances. These uses benefit from very close proximity to one another due to the strong interrelationships between tertiary and service industries.

Industrial uses are generally self-supporting and can bring a benefit to their surroundings through their location.

The analysis of the St. John's downtown core is, therefore, based on the physical requirements of each of these critical uses. Priority has been placed on those which are most sensitive to physical and locational factors.

a) Retail-Commercial

It is well understood by the shopping centre developer that retail use in a climate controlled mall must be continuous, must be anchored by major stores, cannot be longer than

1,000 to 1,500 feet and must have ample, convenient parking. Vital retail activity is crucial to the health and image of a downtown. Thus in setting the land use framework for the St. John's downtown we have given first priority to the needs of retailing.

The east-west distance between the boundaries of the study area is over 5,000 feet. Major retailing occurs along Water Street between Woolworth's just south of City Hall, and the London, New York and Paris ladies wear shop just east of the Atlantic Place complex. This distance is just over 2,000 feet. While this is greater than comfortable walking distance, it is felt that a full downtown retail district can function well at this length. In addition there is a parallel concentration of retail activity of Duckworth Street which is somewhat less strong. An area of restaurants, pubs and entertainment is beginning to develop along George Street. The Water Street retail area is well anchored by a series of major stores - particularly Woolworth's and Bowrings. It suffers from a lack of parking, but appears to be holding its own in competition with the suburban malls.

Recommendation: A primary retail area should be designated and supported as the major shopping district

for Metropolitan St. John's, extending approximately 2,000 feet in length west from Steer's Cove to a point approximately 40 meters (150 feet) west of Prescott Street and north to the City Hall. It should extend, where possible, at right angles to the axis.

b) Office Commercial

There are at least two distinct types of office space which should be accommodated in the core area. Major tenants require first class space in modern buildings which they may wish to have stand out as a projection of their corporate image. For these businesses, high rise office construction must be accommodated, preferably in a compact concentration with good road access. High concentrations of office space should also be within easy walking distance of the retail district so that they provide increased trade during the daytime and early evening to adjacent shops.

St. John's has begun to develop modern office space with the Royal Trust and Atlantic Place located in the centre of the heritage quarter at the east end of the retail district. At the far east edge of the core, a new office building is

now under construction. There has been a recent application for a new twelve storey building at the corner of Prescott and Duckworth Streets, also at the edge of retail district and within the Heritage Area. The City has called for proposals for a combined office/hotel and residential complex on the vacant site adjacent to the City Hall, at the west edge of the retail district. Thus the opportunity to create a concentrated district of modern high-density office building is being lost as fragmented sites are developed and a "tug-of-war" occurs between the east and west poles of the downtown. We recommend to Council a clear decision to concentrate new high density office development in the west end of the core. There is a substantial area of vacant and underused land in this location, the Civic Centre complex is within easy walking distance and the retail district is directly adjacent. The development of a major hotel on the City Hall site would become more attractive with such an office concentration. Buildings in this area would have very convenient road access from the new Harbour Arterial - indeed the public investment in this major road justifies a more intense use of land in this location. Visually a concentration of high-rise towers at the head of the harbour would be most exciting and would lend impact to the image of downtown St. John's without destroying views of the water from Gower Street

and Military Road. The Heritage Area by-law which has until recently received wide public support, could continue in force and the tremendous potential attraction of the historic area of downtown St. John's would not be lost.

There is a second type of office space which should be encouraged to occur throughout the core area and particularly in the Heritage Area. Smaller tenants, often individual professional practices such as doctors, lawyers, accountants or architects need office space at a lower rent, yet attractive and centrally located. This space is now available in St. John's in second and third storeys above shops and in isolated examples of renovated property. The renovation on second and third floors of existing retail property, or the construction of new low-rised mixed use buildings which contain small amounts of office space should occur throughout the study area. The existence of attractive, accessible, low rent office space in the downtown encourages the growth of smaller businesses, artists' studios and professional services, all of which contribute to the vitality of the central business district.

Recommendation: A primary office centre to serve the Metropolitan Area of St. John's should be designated at the west end of the downtown core. In this area the highest densities and heights should be permitted.

A secondary office area to provide lower rent in smaller increments should be encouraged to develop using renovated space or smaller scale new buildings primarily in the commercial section of the Heritage Area.

c) Residential

The older residential neighbourhoods directly north of Duckworth Street should be assisted in their efforts to stabilize and to attract new residents. These neighbourhoods with their narrow streets and Victorian row housing provide a most attractive physical "frame" to the commercial district. The building stock is of heritage quality and is for the most part basically sound. It must be recognized, however, that there is social dislocation to be expected if the efforts to upgrade these neighbourhoods are successful. The attraction of a more affluent middle class population to these areas appears highly possible given the charm of the

Victorian houses when they are renovated and the convenience of their location. However, these neighbourhoods now provide a stock of low-income housing and a stable neighbourhood for a segment of the population which is not easily re-housed elsewhere and whose needs are very great. If a gradual shift to a more affluent population is encouraged and occurs, Council must recognize the need to monitor the change and to assist in solving social problems brought about by this shift.

West of the City Hall and north of the proposed primary office centre there is an area of housing which should also be assisted to regain stability. The protection of this residential area in the context of proposed new development in the area must be given careful thought in the evaluation of development options for the vacant site west of the City Hall. During the public briefing on this plan, which was held January 21, 1980, it was suggested that residential development be encouraged to occur at the west edge of this property. We would recommend that this possibility be seriously considered.

Residential use should be encouraged in low multiple form in mixed use buildings throughout the downtown office and retail areas. The vacant site east of City Hall should be

developed as medium density housing to provide a transition with the low density neighbourhood directly to the east. The northern edge of the combined City Hall sites should also provide a transition of lower density, low rise housing between the new City Hall complex and low density housing north of Wickford Street. A medium to high density concentration of housing could be achieved at the east end of downtown in the general area of the Hotel Newfoundland.

Recommendation: Existing low density neighbourhoods adjacent to the downtown should be protected from spillover effects of traffic and parking and should be assisted with physical upgrading of streets, parks and housing stock. Existing housing form and density should be preserved.

Council should monitor the effects of displacement if existing residents begin to be displaced by a higher income group. Assistance should be available either to help families to stay in their present housing or to relocate them to neighbourhoods which will provide equivalent degrees of social support and accessibility to employment.

Residential use should be encouraged in new mixed use development throughout the downtown core. New housing should particularly be encouraged where it takes advantage of views of the harbour or where it provides housing suitable for families.

d) Height Limits - General Urban Design Principles

The present zoning by-law does not set height limits on new development and heights have been controlled by the setback regulations (in theory) and by negotiation with Council (in practice). We have recommended height limits for the areas described in the next section.

The principle behind these height limits is not the preservation of views of the harbour from within the study area since the harbour is rarely visible when one is south of Gower Street except in quick glimpses down north-south streets. The height limits are based on three principles: preservation of views from above the study area, the narrowness of downtown streets, and the scale of existing buildings. Figure IV.1.1. shows the visual effect on streets of the width of St. John's downtown of development to height of ten and twelve storeys. Figure IV.1.2. shows sectional

views taken through the City in three places, with sight lines to the harbour indicated at each topographic level. Thus both visually and in terms of traffic impact it is felt that streets within the historic quarter of the downtown cannot sustain heights above those recommended in the following section.

e) Summary

In summary the land use framework is based on a strong and contained retail district along Water and Duckworth Streets, a primary office concentration just west of this retail area and southwest of the City Hall complex, a stable growing residential population downtown with a wide choice of housing types, and a Civic Centre complex focused on the City Hall. Industry continues in those harbourfront areas where it is required to serve the local economy.

2. Detailed Development Control Regulations

General Regulations

Open Space Ratios

Throughout the study area the following requirements will apply for private open space in all residential buildings or portions of buildings.

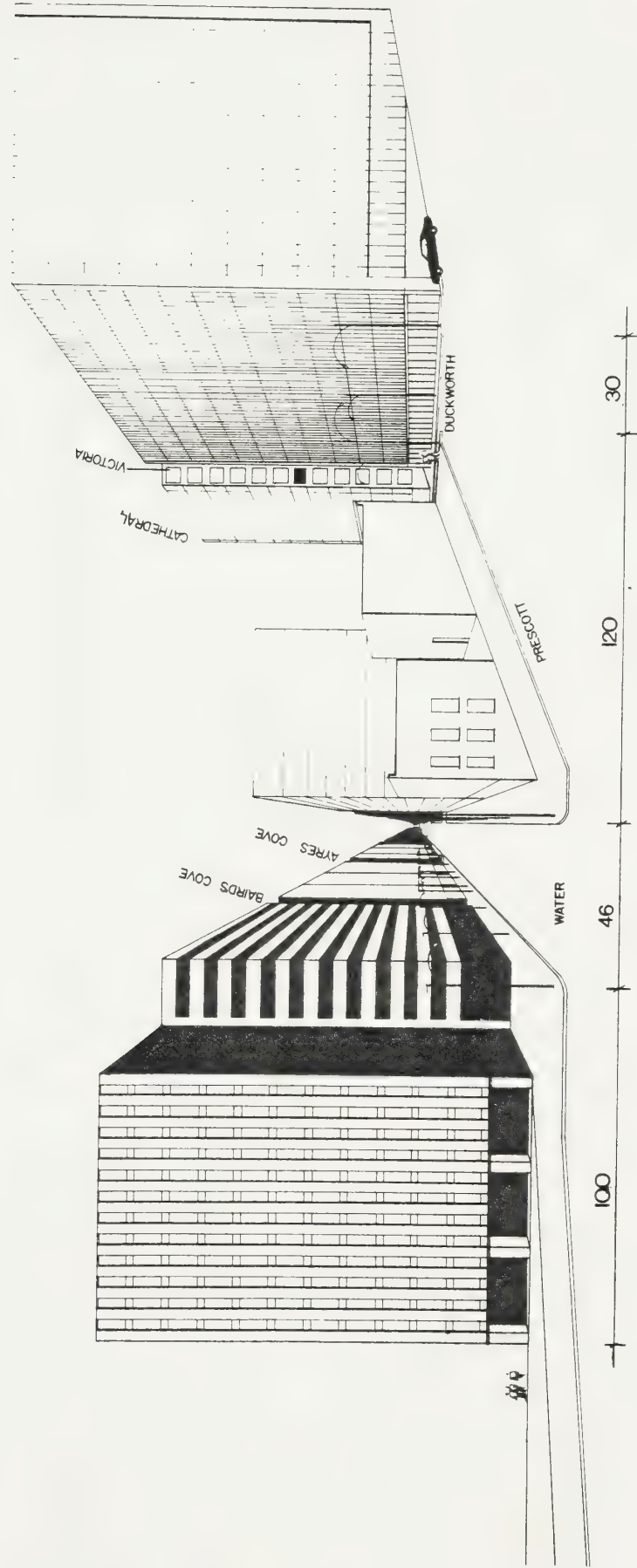


Figure IV.1.1

PERSPECTIVE VIEW
 WEST FROM PRESCOTT STREET
 CITY OF ST. JOHN'S
 CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
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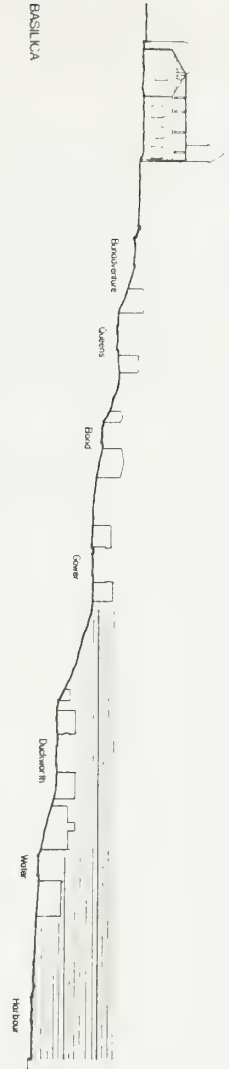
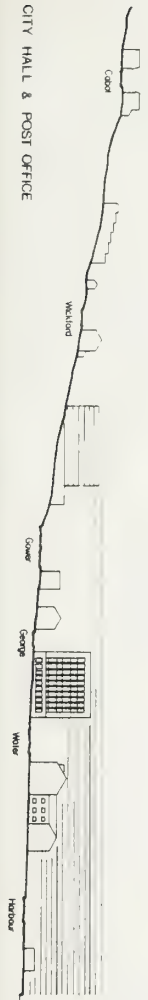


Figure IV.1.2

Figure IV.1.2

SECTIONS

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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A minimum open space requirement of one third of the area of the unit, or 100 square feet, whichever is the greater, must be provided for each residential unit. This open space requirement may be provided at or above grade and may be common or shared space, provided it is accessible to all units. However, as part of the overall open space requirement not less than 100 square feet of individual private space must be provided directly adjacent to each residential unit.

Parking Ratios

Throughout the study area the following parking standards will apply:

one space per 500 square feet of net rentable office space

one space per 300 square feet of retail space used for selling

.50 space per residential unit in multiple unit buildings for residential units of 1200 square feet or less

one space per residential unit in single family, semi-detached and row housing units and in residential units over 1200 square feet

one space for every three bedrooms of hotel space

The developer of any new commercial or mixed use building may elect to make payment to a City-administered parking fund in lieu of providing the required parking space within

his property. In this case, the parking in lieu payment shall be calculated as one half the current appraised construction cost of a space provided in a parking structure. The City shall use funds provided for parking in lieu payments to construct parking garages or underground parking structures in appropriate locations within the study area. Figure IV.2.1. illustrates the proposed land use framework.

a) Primary Retail District

Within the Primary Retail District all new buildings fronting on Water Street, Holdworth Street shall have continuous retail uses located at grade.

Permitted Uses:

To be defined, primarily retail at grade, with offices and residential use above.

Permitted Densities:

The maximum floor area ratio for new building is 3.5 times the area of the lot with the following restrictions:

- 1) 3.0 times the area of the lot for buildings exclusively in commercial use
- 2) 2.0 times the area of the lot for buildings exclusively in residential use
- 3) 3.5 times the area of the lot for mixed use buildings of which a maximum of 3.0 F.A.R. may be in commercial use, and a maximum of 1.0 may be in residential use

Maximum Heights:

The maximum height limit for new buildings is 40 feet (13 metres -approximately 4 storeys)

Council will encourage the retention of facades for buildings and streetscapes designated as worthy of preservation in Figure IV.2.2. To this end, financial assistance may be provided in the form of partial relief from municipal property taxes and/or purchase of facade easement rights for buildings in which the facade is preserved and restored.

b) Primary Office Centre

Permitted Uses:

To be defined; primarily office-commercial with limited retail at grade.

Permitted Densities:

The maximum floor area ratio for new building is 4.0 times the area of the lot. Of this, a maximum of .50 times the area of the lot is permitted in retail use, and a maximum of 1.0 times the area of the lot is permitted in residential use.



Figure IV.2.1

PROPOSED ZONING
& LAND USE MAP

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CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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Maximum Height:

The maximum height limit for new building is 96 feet (30 metres -approximately 8 storeys)

c) Civic Centre: Mixed Use Area

Permitted Uses:

To be defined in detail - to include hotel, office, retail and residential.

Area C-1: emphasis is on hotel, office and retail space

Area C-2: existing City Hall and parking structure

Area C-3: medium density residential use with limited convenience retail

Area C-4: low density residential use with limited convenience retail

Permitted Densities:

The maximum floor area ratio in Area C-1 is 3.0 times the area of the lot.

The maximum floor area ratio in Area C-3 is 1.5 times the area of the lot in residential use of which .5 may be local convenience retail.

The maximum floor area ratio in Area C-4 is 1.0 times the area of lot in residential use of which .5 may be local convenience retail

Maximum Height:

The maximum height limit for new building is 22 metres (72 ft. - 6 storeys) in Area C-1, 15 metres (48 ft. -

4 storeys) in Area C-3 and 11 metres (36 ft. - 3 storeys in Area C-4.

d) Secondary Office Commercial Centre

Permitted Uses:

To be defined - primarily office commercial and residential with small amounts of local retail use.

Permitted Densities:

The total maximum density permitted is 3.5 times the area of the lot, with the following restrictions:

- 1) 3.0 times the area of the lot for buildings exclusively in commercial use
- 2) 3.5 times the area of the lot for a mixed use building of which a maximum of .50 times the area of the lot may be in residential use, and .25 times the area of the lot may be in retail use, which is to be located at grade level only.

e) Residential Areas - R1 and R2

Permitted Uses:

To be defined - primarily residential with local institutional and community services.



Figure IV.2.2

HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARIES & DESIGNATED BUILDINGS

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Permitted Densities:

- R1 Area: Residential use is permitted to a maximum density of .80 times the area of the lot (or 10 units per acre)
- R2 Area: Residential use is permitted to a maximum density of 2.0 times the area of the lot. Within the 2.0 F.A.R. total, .50 may be developed as local convenience retail use

Maximum Height:

- R1 Area: the maximum height limit is 10 metres (35 feet - 3 storeys)
- R2 Area: the maximum height limit is 15 metres (50 feet - 5 storeys)

f) Open Space

In principle the plan does not recommend major new areas of open space within downtown St. John's. There is a major green space in front of the Cathedral which is unfortunately unavailable for use by the public. The City's charm derives from the compactness of its building form and its steep topography set against the open expanse of water and the changing activity of the harbour. Small well designed open space occurs in walkways and steps leading north-south between the buildings. A good example of sheltered courtyard space has been developed in the Murray property which has a scale and urbanity

appropriate to St. John's. The foregoing development guidelines do not recommend set backs or required open space ratios. Instead it is felt that development should, on appropriate sites, be built to the lot lines, particularly in Primary and Secondary Office Commercial Areas and in the Primary Retail Area. The creation of interior block open space and the effective use of small public spaces should be encouraged through both public and private initiative.

War Memorial

There is one space in the downtown which presently is under-used and which has great potential as a major urban symbol. The war memorial is presently lost among surrounding larger buildings and faces the harbour across an area of scattered industrial buildings and undefined spaces. If it were possible to create an inlet of water which would frame it, and to provide landscaping, this small green area could become a highly imageable feature of the waterfront. It is recommended that this possibility be seriously explored.

g) Potential Redevelopment Areas and Sightlines

Redevelopment Sites

We have identified a number of sites for potential

redevelopment within the core area. These areas are indicated on Figure IV.2.3. It is recognized that many of these sites contain good existing buildings and that in some cases these buildings are relatively new. Nevertheless, if pressure for higher density development is felt, it should be directed to these areas. Buildings indicated in black on Figure IV.2.4. should be preserved. The total development potential which could be accommodated in these sites, at the densities recommended in this plan is approximately 3,500,000 square feet, or almost double the existing space in the entire study area. Figure IV.2.4. shows these sites developed in a form and at densities such as are recommended in this plan.

Sightlines

The core area of St. John's from Gower Street south to the harbour, is characterized by a tight concentration of low-rise buildings lining relatively narrow streets. From Gower Street south the harbour is not visible at most mid-block points - three and four storey buildings lining the street, block the view, which is only present when one climbs above the downtown to the height of Wickford Street and Queen's Road.

There is a sense of containment and urbanity in these downtown streets. The drop in topography towards the harbour punctuates this tight urban form with sudden vistas down narrow streets to the water and ships. These sudden glimpses of water and ships framed by narrow streets and low rise buildings add excitement and life and are most important to the character and image of the downtown. We have identified these sightlines (Figure IV.2.3.) to enable these views to be preserved. In most instances the sightlines do not interfere with building sites. Transportation planning and site development proposals which touch on these sightlines should make every effort to preserve and improve them.

h) Parking

There is a serious shortage of parking throughout the downtown core. A breakdown of the existing building square footage and available parking indicates that in every area of the downtown, with the exception of City Hall, there is insufficient parking for retail, office and residential space. The problem is unfortunately not easy to solve. St. John's has very little vacant space



Figure IV.2.3

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS & SIGHT LINES

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Figure IV.2.4

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT FORM

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in the core on which to create either surface or structure parking. Because the city is built on rock, underground parking is extremely expensive to construct. The topography and street layout, however, present an interesting possibility which we believe to be worth further investigation.

Many of the short north-south street which link Water and Duckworth Streets dead-end at the rock escarpment. Underground garages could be created in these areas by tunnelling space in the rock cliff and creating two or three levels of parking under existing streets and buildings. We have shown one such area north of Duckworth under Henry Street, in which 200 - 300 cars could be accommodated. The shortfall of parking in this area of the core is estimated at 2700 spaces, using the standards recommended in this report. Redevelopment in the Civic Centre area and in the new office core should assist considerably in redressing the parking shortfall in the west end of the core.

It is recognized that tunnelling to create parking is an expensive solution but it is estimated that the cost premium above the construction cost of normal underground

parking would not be very large. The cost of such work requires further investigation. We believe the premium to create such parking is an investment in the health of downtown St. John's which can be well repaid through parking in lieu payments and through the general increase in prosperity and assessment which flows from a healthy retail district coupled with an active tourism industry. While we are not aware of similar parking solutions in North America, such garages have been created in Europe to make room for needed parking without disturbing the historic core of older cities. Figure IV.2.5. shows the approximate shortfall of parking in each area^{*}. Figure IV. 2.6. shows proposed underground parking areas.

* Calculations based on built areas and parking totals supplied by the St. John's Planning Department.



Figure IV.2.6

PROPOSED PARKING AREAS

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Figure IV.2.5

PARKING SHORTAGE BY AREA

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